



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

August 29, 2019

Phillip Duarte
Pathways Committee
City of Taunton
City Hall
141 Oak Street
Taunton, MA 02780

RE: Taunton River Trail, Taunton, Dighton and Somerset, MA. MHC #RC.66835.

Dear Mr. Duarte

Staff of the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), office of the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Officer, have reviewed the Project Notification Form (PNF), submitted by Stantec for Phases I and II of the Taunton portion of the overall trail project referenced above. Future phases are also proposed in Dighton and Somerset.

The PNF indicates that the project requires review and/or funding by federal and state agencies. The MHC will review the project under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (36 CFR 800) and looks forward to consultation with the involved federal and state agencies and consulting parties to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects to significant historic and archaeological resources.

Review of the Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth indicates that the preliminary project impact area is within a portion of the Weir Village industrial area (MHC #TAU.K). The project corridor is in proximity to the Sandy Hill Cemetery (MHC # TAU.837; TAU.HA.41) and Walker-Blake Cemetery (TAU. 836; TAU.HA.40). Ancient Native American archaeological sites are also recorded in the MHC's Inventory in the vicinity of the project area along the Taunton River.

Phase I and II project impact areas are proposed within paved and/or disturbed streets, utility, and former railroad right-of-ways. Limited undisturbed portions of the project impact area, including areas that may contain intact buried natural soils underneath fill deposits within existing road and/or utility right-of-ways, are archaeologically sensitive. Intact, significant archaeological resources associated with ancient Native American and early historical period occupation of Taunton may be present within undisturbed project impact areas. This archaeological sensitivity of the preliminary project impact area is primarily due to its environmental setting, with well-drained soils in proximity to recorded archaeological sites, historical cemeteries, and the wetlands and water resources of the Taunton River, favorable for ancient and historical period land use and occupation.

The MHC recommends that the Phase I and II project aspects be further designed to incorporate measures to avoid and/or minimize ground impacts within archaeologically sensitive project impact areas, including cemetery access pathways. The MHC looks forward to reviewing additional scaled existing and proposed conditions project plans, sized no larger than 11 by 17 inches, as design proceeds for the preferred project route alternatives.

These comments are offered to assist in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (36 CFR 800), and Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 9, Sections 26-27C (950 CMR 70-71). If you have any questions concerning these comments, please contact Jonathan K. Patton at this office.

Sincerely,



Brona Simon
State Historic Preservation Officer
Executive Director
State Archaeologist
Massachusetts Historical Commission

xc: Jacinda Russell, Access Program Manager, FHWA
Barbara Newman, USACE-NED, Regulatory
Kate Atwood, USACE-NED
Bettina Washington, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)
David Weeden, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
Melissa Cryan, EEA-DCS
Hillary B. King, Stantec